

Transcript of Flexible Funding Town Hall

OPDV hosted the Flexible Funding Town Hall on 7/13/23 from 1-3 PM via Webex. The meeting was recorded, and the following is a transcript of that meeting. This transcription was edited only for clarity where the transcription may have been inaccurate.

Introduction by Elizabeth Bliss, Director of Gender-Based Violence Response, NYS OPDV:

The purpose of the town hall is to request feedback from survivors as well as any nonprofit, educational organization or government entity that provides services to survivors of domestic, and gender-based violence. The focus of this feedback is to identify the factors that New York state should consider in determining how to allocate the funding in a trauma-informed, survivor-centered, and culturally responsive manner.

The part that I'm sure you're all really anticipating knowing and understanding is how we're going to do this. We have created four questions that were sent to all registrants after you registered. The comments are being sent back out to all participants and there are four questions that participants will have three minutes to speak in response to each question. We are going to be doing it question by question. Anything that you put in chat is going to be part on the record of comments that we receive.

If you all are prepared, we have Megan Quillinan from the Mechanical Area Community Services Center, Sarah Carmichael from Oswego Opportunities, and then Monica Lee, and Teresa Winchester from the YMCA of Mohawk Valley who have indicated that, in addition to the written testimony that they submitted, they will provide oral testimony. Any additional requests for oral testimony can be provided to us information in the chat and my wonderful team here that's managing the chat will keep me up to date. We have also Sarita Green from Fearless!, Gabriella Sandoval from New Destiny Housing, Lauren Shaller, from My Sister's Place, and Elizabeth Santiago from Center for Safety and Change. You can send comments either through our email, or the form that we will send out again after the call.

Starting off with the most important thing is that we all know as people who are working with or caring about survivors of gender-based violence, financial concerns are a barrier to safety. And, for many years there have been different versions of how to provide flexible funding and how it has been done across the country including in New York State. Abbey is going describe those in a little bit. Flexible funding is effective because it is survivor driven. We recognize that each survivor has their own unique needs and how survivors use the funding should not be compartmentalized into little boxes.

Flexible funding is effective because it removes obstacles. The low barrier requirements mean that funding can be provided quickly to address immediate crisis. We also hear

frequently from survivors that the delay in receiving financial assistance is sometimes just not helpful. They need it at the time that they need it.

I'm going to turn it over to Abby who's going to discuss understanding the funding and we'll take it from there. Thank you.

Information on Procurement Laws by Abbey Marr, Associate Counsel & Deputy Executive Director | Bureau of Gender Based Violence Prevention & Programming, NYS OPDV

Thanks Elizabeth. Hi for those who don't know me, I'm Abbey Marr and I am the Deputy Executive Director for Prevention and Programming here at OPDV, and Associate Council. I will be explaining the structure of this funding stream to help frame our conversation today. I'll also talk a little bit about the lessons that we've already heard from many of you. We want to make sure to capture what we have heard in the funding streams that have gone out in the past couple of years.

I'll just begin by starting with the actual appropriation language that was put in this year's budget, which passed in early May. This funding stream that we're discussing today is \$5Million dollars of annual state funding. It must be dedicated to services, expenses and grants to government entities and nonprofits. That would be the pool of folks that are combinations of who we would work with, on getting this funding out. Funding then must be used to provide financial assistance to victims and survivors of domestic violence. That's a broad category of financial assistance to victims and survivors of domestic violence. Out plan for distributing must be developed by our agency and approved by the director of the budget. That means the Division of Budget and the Governor's Office all are going to be involved in approving the plan based on feedback and to make sure that it's a plan that makes sense for the state of New York. Like, any other procurement, which I'll talk about more in a second, our plan also needs to be approved by the office of the State Controller, I really do want to highlight that because that is something that is different than some of the COVID funding that come through and was given out under emergency authorization. We are not in that situation anymore. So, there will be a lot of players involved in developing our plan.

The language in the appropriation itself is on paper that we are using to guide our process. During pandemic emergency assistance funding program last year, we solicited a lot of feedback from our partners, many who I see here on WebEx about how it worked, how we could do it better, and then we've also heard through other programming, similar things. We wanted to make sure to capture what that feedback we already received. So, first, we heard that the success stories showed we need funding that meet survivors where they are, it helps them address their needs they have without a bunch of barriers. So, we knew that from past research, we'd heard it, and we continued to hear it from the funding we had given out that we need even more flexibility and allowable expenses.

While we did have some more flexible funding streams through, for example, PEAFF or the pandemic emergency assistance fund, those federal funds still have limitations around things like transportation, childcare, and we heard that those were real limitations in using the funding, similarly, eligibility requirements, such as requirements around income level, around citizenship and immigration status left out too many folks and created unnecessary barriers and harmful barriers for survivors to get access to funding. We heard that funding should be available for longer periods of time. So not a quick turnaround, but a longer amount of time to allow programs to get up and running and to the extent possible, advances for programs were really important, for those implementing it. There is not a need for programs to have to front cash and be reimbursed.

We heard of the importance of a line for administrative costs so that burdens programs took in helping survivors navigate flex funding and getting the money out there is accommodated and compensated. Finally, that the limited availability of housing stock continues to make it hard to use funds to help survivors get sustainable housing. We can get a lot of money out there and that we continue to have a housing crisis and obviously, that larger contacts of course, still exists here. We have listened to that or are trying to when we think through this funding.

For the procurement, the other important thing to note is procurement law. We have to get this money out there consistent with state procurement law. And the goal of state finance law and thinking about fair procurement is that we have to procure commodities services and technology, and this would count as services to promote the mission of our agency to but also to protect taxpayer interests and promote fairness in contracting.

This is the language that we have from state finance. And we have quite a long manual that we have to follow on procurement. We will make sure that's available in the slides, but the link is also there. With that theory, there are sort of 3 relevant, common procurement methods. And this is plan essentially that we would have to be coming up with to get the money out there. I'll note all are subject to the approval. So whichever route we would propose, this is something that would need to be approved, not only internally to the executive branch, but that reports to the governor, then also by the comptroller's office. We're going to go through all three of them and then I'll turn it back over.

First is a competitive procurement, and this can look a variety of ways but that is procurement where we are essentially soliciting interest and soliciting an application or proposal. By asking folks to come to us to show why they need a certain set of folks, many organizations, whatever, however, we designed it, but to show why they would need a certain amount of money. And how could they accomplish goals that we set out. It is competitive and it would be scored internally. That is a specific competitive process that's governed by procurement law.

The second is non-competitive. That's not asking folks to apply but instead sort of coming up with an alternate plan, or methods that are available. Generally, first is called a sole source and it means we would be making an argument there's only 1 entity that could

provide what services are required here. For example, if we need a certain type of database and there's only 1 entity in the world that makes that type of database. With single source we would be making an argument that a competitive procurement is not feasible here.

Town Hall Questions: Elizabeth Bliss

With guiding questions, I'm going to just go through the four questions on the slides right now. Then I'm going to come back to the 1st slide and then open up the floor for questions.

The overall question is - what is the lowest barrier way to get this funding out to survivors?

1st question: What hurdles do survivors face when trying to access financial resources from the system?

2nd question: How should the state determine how funding passes through individual programs to insure the most equitable reach to all survivors? Grants to many programs to distribute funds directly to their community, or grants to regional or state hubs to distribute funding across the state as requested by survivors or other options.

3rd question: What are the administrative or operational concerns for programs related to getting this money to survivors as the most flexible way possible? What are the compliance and risk management concerns and what are the documentation and auditing concerns that a program might have?

4th Question: What type of training and technical assistants should the state provide grantee programs to effectively distribute this funding?

Question 1: What is the Lowest barrier way to get this funding out to survivors. That's kind of the big picture that we're going for. The 1st question that we have for everybody is what hurdles survivors face when trying to access financial resources from the system?

Megan Quillinan, Mechanicville Area Community Services Center (MACSC)

I really do appreciate it and I won't even take the 3 minutes, but we are coming from the perspective of a smaller nonresidential program in an urban rural area, with limited access to things like transportation. I think most we like what was listed in that great overview, but also thinking of transportation with a more liberal view. Whether its buses or needing car repairs, we see a lot of as this as a need well as. Streamlining, so that survivors don't need to do multiple intakes with multiple people, retelling their story over and over. Requirements like timing, and it hasn't been long enough to access funds, or it's been too long since something happened or waiting on police reports or paperwork and more paperwork. Those kinds of things really hold things up. And I guess mostly looking at allowing the ability to look at individual situations and access funds in a timely manner for

longer periods of time. With PEAFF, I think the biggest successes from our perspective was the ability to help people multiple months with multiple bills to really get settled.

Sarita Green from Fearless!

I also won't take the full 3 minutes for this 1 question, but we just want to add, having as few restrictions and barriers as possible. With some of the qualifying criteria for PEAFF, only allowed us to provide that support to very narrow group of survivors that were working with and connected to in our agency.

But we also feel really concerned through the PEAFF process about it being a bit of a band aid. While there was the ability to provide several months of support, it didn't allow opportunity for coupling that. With supportive services and really mapping out a plan to help get folks to a place of being able to maintain and sustain beyond the support that we were able to provide through PEAFF. And would hope that - I know this doesn't fully fit into this question but, I just would hope that there's a way to pair the financial assistance with other support that will be more supportive of long-term sustainability and safety for survivors and not set people up to be in a position of having all of the things they need in this very moment, but not being able to partner and plan around their wellness in a more long-term way.

Lauren Shaller from My Sister's Place

Basically, what I was going to say, it goes to some of what Abbey mentioned from feedback that she's already gathered. And I also want to echo what was said about really wanting this to promote long term sustainability for the clients we serve. While many clients were grateful, it was 1 shot deal kind of thing. And then what's the plan after this, what am I going to do next? How am I going to pay my next month's rent or you know get the next thing that I need? So, it was just kind of setting them up for failure in a way and we don't want to do that. Also, the criteria to be eligible, don't want there to be any criteria we want all the survivors that we serve to be able to access funds in a way that really works for them. We really want the survivor to be able to tell us what they need rather than us telling them what we think they need. For example, if we have a survivor come to us and say, you know, what I really need is for you to help me pay for summer camp for my 2 kids. Because that will really enable me to take care of what I need to do this summer to get our family on the right track. And I want to be able to send them to summer camp, and that we can say great that's what we're going to provide to you.

Ann Ellsworth from Putnam/Northern Westchester Women's Resource Center

The goal is that we hear from everybody that wants to share. So, thank you for being here. I would like to jump on what Lauren and Sarita were saying, I think the issues with barriers for flexible funding and barriers to victims is about making sure that people can sustain themselves past distribution of crisis, intervention, and funding. I think with PEAFF, what I found, although we were able to help number of people with money for the immediate needs, they weren't able to sustain themselves with that money and if those are the hurdles, the hurdles for me to access money that won't help them sustain. We

need to help them find ways to sustain so that we are not developing a dependency on where they don't want to have with us. I don't like being in a position where we are providing funding to folks without their plan and seeing the end of their plan, they have goals that they want to reach, and I want to help them with it. And if it's about money, getting it in their hands that's great. And if this can help us, do that but I think we have to learn from PEAFF and know that some folks are still struggling out there and be able to find ways that the barrier is about sustainability and eligibility. If we can find ways to remove those pieces, then this can be sustainable. Funding flexible funding be a sustainable source for victims, thank you.

Aditi Bhattacharya from New York City Anti Violence Project

I am from the New York City Anti Violence Project and thank you for adding me to the list here. I wasn't able to chat or introduce myself in the chat. So, I appreciate you sharing and for doing the back-end work. In some sense, I think Lauren said much of what came up. When we were contemplating your questions and as all good advocates do, we are looking at the immediate and we're advocating for the long-term flexibility and sustainability of financial need and financial assistance to survivors.

My comment to this question is going to also kind of touch on the other 2 questions. So, I'll just offer my comment and then step back from the other 2. The biggest barrier that we are seeing which connects to something as you mentioned earlier, is that there are far too many checks and balances for survivors to prove their survivorship. And then far too many barriers for survivors to even know that these funds are available through various agencies in the spirit of trauma-informed and culturally sensitive care. The fact that there is a lot of effort that we, as the recipients of these funds, and the folks that disburse them must put into our infrastructure, which we may not be able to get paid for is something that I would hope that you all can advocate changes. It connects to this question because we must put in a lot of effort, and if we cannot put in that requirement of effort, then community may not have full access to the fact that we have money. 2nd, the gate keeping of who gets to access the money that has already been mentioned by Lauren and before. Third, is the amount of paperwork that goes into proving eligibility. No more proving of eligibility, let's just trust survivors as the experts for what they want and let them have the money, the way that they want to have the money for whatever it is that they need to have the money for. And in that vein for us, in doing the paperwork to prove the success story of how the survivor used the money. I don't have an elegant way of offering my feedback here, but if we're not going to keep who comes in to get the money can we simplify how we define a success? So that it doesn't feed into the gatekeeping. That would be my feedback and my comment for this question.

Stephanie McGraw from WARM

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Stephanie. The barriers and struggles are real because we were on the front line, because we are out here. Boots on the ground and embedded and invested in this fight. I don't know how we are going to be able to survive with not having the flexible fund. One of the thing is we did the PEAFF, and we gave that

money to the women, but that was like, putting a band aid on the Grand Canyon because the needs were so great. And then we had challenges because we gave up a certain amount of money and we didn't have the additional funding. To be able to utilize all the money because this is upfront with the state in the city you have to have upfront money. When you get the grants from the state in the city, it's reimbursement money. We are struggling because this year they took away the advancement, right? So, we can't even get an investment on our contract because they completely stop the investment, so how a small grassroots agencies are going to survive when we have this system set up where there's no upfront money to give agency that are doing the work? And the other thing I heard about is paperwork and bureaucracy, we are the only agency that turned around on the dime meaning that when system's coming here, they go directly to hotel and to safety spaces because we have this relationship with the police where they are bringing them directly to us. They're not going the other agencies and doing intakes, because these situations are so dangerous and sometimes I have no capacity for these women and children so they're being dropped off our locations and we're using money that we don't have since we're not getting up front money from our contracts. It's reimbursement. And we're using some of that emergency money to put women in a hotel because there is no shelter and the police had to expedite the family court because there were guns involved or one of the problems there was someone murdered, and they had to take everybody out clean up and do an investigation. There's nothing set up for victims where they can go to the location for safety.

Expediently not the whole process of going on the phone waiting doing all these intakes. So, our concerns are money that was tracked when the state got to get the money directly into the people that are out there doing the work.

Question 2: How should the state determine how funding passes through all individual programs to ensure the most equitable reach to all survivors grants to many programs to distribute funds directly to their community or grants. Regional or state hubs to distribute funding across the state is requested by survivors or other options.

Megan Quillinan from MACSC

We're coming at this as a definition of flex funding, being immediate and needed now and not necessarily a solution to sustaining long term support. You know, Stephanie was just saying about things like putting people up in hotels, right away when shelters are full. So, I just want to clarify or ask what the definition of flex funding really is because it seems we're all approaching it a little differently but as an answer to this question we feel strongly that we, as an advocate agency here in our community know our community best, and would love to see funds distributed directly to us to distribute directly to survivors. But we do also recognize we're a smaller agency and one of the things with PEAFF that seemed problematic was while we were thankful for so much money that we were getting, the same amount of money as larger much larger residential agencies, was not real equitable.

But we like the fact that it came directly to us and to have money up front instead of having to be reimbursed would be extremely helpful.

Sarita Green from Fearless!

I echo what Megan shared just around the money coming directly to the agencies that are working within specific communities. I believe Stephanie also mentioned before the importance of having access to the money upfront. So that we're not having to fund at all and then be reimbursed later. Originally with PEAFF, I know the plan was that it had just been distributed equally. We definitely appreciate a noncompetitive process in regard to how that happens but does it make sense based on different sizes of different organizations or their service regions. So, we're across 2 counties so potentially the amount that's being distributed be impacted by it, and I think that's all right now.

Lauren Shaller from My Sister's Place

Thank you. I'm just going to again echo my colleagues about distribution. Giving the money to local programs directly. Of course, providing us with the support that we need to be able to administer the funds, whether that's training, technical assistance, resources for staff and to pay us up front again. That's the big word of the day. Also the last thing was, trust us, you know, trust that we see our clients as the leaders and the experts in their own lives and that we are going to support and honor that. Trust us to administer these funds in a way that honors our mission, our values and all of that.

Gabriela Sandoval Requena from New Destiny Housing

We want to echo what others have said. Survivors know better than anyone else what help they need for their civilization and how to make better use of flexible funding. Also the organizations that already work with them, we feel like all this, I've said that organizations that have mechanisms in place are fit to give flexible funding quickly and directly to survivors as needed. Also, just to take a step back to PEAFF we were not able to participate in the program because we're not an OCFS licensed entity. So, just thinking beyond that, those requirements and to include other nonprofit organizations, maybe that already participate in rapid rehousing programs that are funded by the federal government. That already provide flexible funding like we do here in the city.

You know, we already have the mechanisms in place for that. Not just for this 1st thing quickly, but also for tracking so taking a look at those opportunities, this time around I think it's highly encouraged.

Elizabeth Santiago from Center for Safety & Change

Thank you for allowing me to speak and for having this town hall and hearing all of us. I do believe that the funding should come directly to the local community agencies. So that's 1st, and foremost. I do think that what we learned as nonprofits from the work, especially around PEAFF, was those best intentions, being able to maximize all the money but if we don't have the money up front that it's not really going to make it to the hands of the victims. From a cashflow perspective - if we really are saying that we're a client

centered, and we want the money to get to victims the burden should not be put on the nonprofit to be able to do that. And similar to what many of my colleagues on this call have actually already said it's trust that victims are the ones who should be able to determine what their priorities are. So, a noncompetitive process is always one less application that we have to actually compete against each other on is a wonderful thing.

Ann Ellsworth from Putnam/Northern Westchester Women's Resource Center

In terms of this, again, I am also going to echo what's being said, add another piece, I forgot it in the 1st question. Knowing that there's a possibility of ongoing funds, possibly changes things for me, PEAFF was 25 million dollars. This is \$5million and everyone on this call wants to help victims directly and have that money at their spaces, so if it's disbursed that way that I can't see many victims receiving enough funding to address all their needs. I think that we need to look at sending it to the agencies ahead of time. Not having a hub because that just gives us another barrier for the victim to have to jump over. Having it competitive would also just takes away the energy from where it really should be, which is with the victim, determining what their needs are and what they need to sustain themselves. I think that having the information that Abbey, you gave at the beginning, and I didn't really understand before we got on this call, helps me to answer these questions better. I would like to have all things, but not knowing all this about how the flexible funding works and how we procure. Well, that part I think it's important that we have an opportunity to write a little more about this because this piece is important if we don't have the money. \$5Million sounds wonderful and I don't want to sound ungrateful for the victims, but it's when it gets right across the state, what's going to be in the bank for me to give a client?

Aditi Bhattacharya from New York City Anti Violence Project

All of the above that was said. And what my other colleagues have said previously, in very quick bullet points; Noncompetitive, non-discretionary, upfront reception of the funds for us so it's not reimbursement based. I'm thinking about the emergency cash assistance program that happened during the pandemic recap and I think that was, if I understood Abbey correctly, that's like where you have the hub and if that was the hub system then we're grateful for the hub system. It was an administrative nightmare for us to actually do the work that we were doing. And that connects to my last piece of feedback, which is the screening, we've already mentioned agency to clients to receive at their own terms and so on. As organizations trust us, that if we are serving a survivor in our organization AVP survivor of all kinds of violence, including some department, family violence, et cetera, not to do a separate screening and a separate intake over and above the ones we already do to offer funds, both from the perspective of administrative overhead and time and from the perspective of also language justice access and trauma informed access to care that my colleagues have named earlier already.

Stephanie McGraw from WARM

How should it be? I think the money should go directly to the programs. Because sometimes when you are in the situations you're out there, you're doing the work and it

takes so long, but sometime the problem flow, because you got to go to so many different processes, so, if there was a way that the system could be created where we can directly get the money we need based on the work that we are doing that would be helpful for the organization, for the survivors and for the staff, because some, right now are kind of overwhelmed, based on how the system is set up. So we think that especially small grassroots and, some of the organizations are fairly large, and they have better systems in place that help support them. But small organizations, money then follow directly to the agencies will be a great thing.

Jacquetta Jenkins

We are super new agency, and we provide emergency shelter. We are not yet approved, and we are working on our application with OCFS, and we are nearing the end and we're hoping to be approved. We're just waiting for that approval, but my question is, will this funding be available to agencies that are not licensed and approved of OCFS yet.

Abbey Marr, OPDV responding to the above question

I think we haven't made those decisions and so I'm hearing on the call you think that's an important consideration.

Question 3: What are the administrative or operational concerns for programs related to getting this money to survivors the most flexible way possible. What are the compliance and risk management concerns and what are the documentation and auditing concerns that a program might have?

Megan Quillinan from MACSC

Short and sweet, please allow admin, trust us. Like someone else said absolutely to do one intake and have it count and just please let us have admin again. If we're going to be survivor focused and client centered also trusting, valuing the staff, whether that needs to be done through our finance office or the advocate, or you know, how we want to handle that and how we need to build that admin.

Sarita Green from Fearless!

So similarly, please allow admin connected to lessons learned from PEAFF. There was no administrative support available to the agency and truthfully it was a huge lift, in terms of time and resources as well as even tracking to print to provide the resource for survivors that we were connected to. That would be extremely helpful. I think hopefully we're in a different place than we were with PEAFF, but even just the time to plan for and roll out whatever it is that it will be because we've had a very short turnaround time. There was a point where after PEAFF had rolled out, there was a change in some of the guidance that was given and so just having all of the information up front that we know what we're working with and can operate within, realistic timeframe. And have the resources that we need organizationally to be able to pull it off.

Lauren Shaller from My Sister's Place

At my sister's place, we are very lucky to have an incredible finance team, but we have to be able to compensate them for their time and effort to organize all this important work and we want to have reasonable paperwork and backup requirements.

We don't want to put any burden on the survivor to have to provide us with anything to prove themselves or out themselves to us, or to any other 3rd party entity that we might be payment to and again to echo all my colleagues having this a reasonable time frame to do program planning and to distribute the funds. Also the very last thing that we as the DV provider would not be penalized for when an audit happens that we're not going to be penalized for how we distribute the funds.

Gabriela Sandoval Requena from New Destiny Housing

I just echo others. We feel that having a set aside to cover administrative costs is really important. We for somewhat similar program in the city had been advocating for 15% set aside for administrative costs. If that serves as parameter we know that the pot of money is small with \$5Million across the state but 15% set aside would probably be enough to help agencies, cover administrative costs and not overload staff. We also agree with not burdening the survivors with the paperwork and bring up documentation, and for that, we need clear guidelines from the get-go as to what needs to be collected. Who needs to be responsible for maintaining that, if there is a time around to provide that to the state, or to another agency. For those parameters and those guidelines to be clear, from the very beginning. And I presume that we're, as we think of flexible funding, we're considering this the super important to mention here, is that in order to give the flexible funding to survivors in a quick manner or to pay on behalf of them. We need to be able to give cash, to give checks, or gift cards, or bank transfers. So, all of those forms of payment should be allowed in the program or again to pay on behalf of survivors to 3rd parties.

I presume that I'm stating the obvious I just wanted to put that on the record as well. And thank you so much for the opportunity to share our comments here.

Elizabeth Santiago from Center for Safety & Change

We all have to admit \$5Million dollars sounds like a lot, but it really is a band-aid. So it's hard to say what we want. As I believe it was Ann who said earlier that we want to give money to survivors and victims, and we also know as nonprofits that we need administrative costs. So that number just shrunk. For what's going to go into the actual hands of victims keeping that in mind, we do need an administrative allowable cost component. There shouldn't be a duplication of intakes. If we've deemed people as victims that should suffice. And that we shouldn't add as others have said, additional burdens to victims such as having to prove that they're working with a criminal justice system or that it's another system that determines their victimization, and they're already working with us. The time frame is key in terms of the turnaround. Because the reality is if we're utilizing PEAFF as the example, it's like it was an announcement out there, while we were still trying to figure out the logistics and it was publicly announced, not by us, but

by the state. People were then inquiring about the funds that we thought didn't have our ducks in order, nor did we have the funds or those pieces. So, I do think there's something to be said about ensuring that we're on the same page as to when the announcement's happening when things are going to actually start and what the turnaround period is. And preferably not during the quarterly month, because we already have enough quarterly reports.

Ann Ellsworth from Putnam/Northern Westchester Women's Resource Center

I will just say admin and for a lot of reasons and I'm also the one that said we got to spread that money around but we're talking about audits, what we haven't been talking about, because what it's by a contractor or by a state agency is a conversation and a review, But when you're doing your 990 or your single audit which we do both when we had money. The amount of time it took me and my financial department or person, and my contract person to figure out a procedure where we could justify cash, just given out checks was very wavy in terms of making sure that this agency was going to pass audit this year. Because \$187k or whatever \$1000's dollars that was in and out in 3 months raises a flag from an auditor's perspective. What was covered was unique, but it doesn't preclude us from having our own responsibilities as an entity, our own private entity. As a nonprofit to answer to the federal government, and to our taxes.

The function of the overall agency can be put in jeopardy by something not being documented in the right way. I would never want to put anyone in that position. And everything else my colleagues said.

Aditi Bhattacharya from New York City Anti Violence Project

What everybody else said. Thinking specifically about what Elizabeth and Gabi said earlier, underscoring that alongside front ending admin budget line items, also allowing for infrastructural expenses and minimizing the amount of paperwork that is expected for a survivor to prove their survivorship, depending on all of us have case notes software's. So, allowing for our ability to document our work with our clients to be. The necessary standard of proving the efficacy of disbursing the funds, the way that we need to the last piece, which may have been said, and I risk redundancy. Here is expanding or being very clear in the different tools in which this money can be disbursed. Whether that is a gift card, or that is a check or that is whatever partnership with another organization, et cetera because we've had experiences with before where there's significant limitations in how we can disburse the money. And then there's just too many administrative checks and balances that preclude our ability to be able to even invest the money in the gift cards in the first place.

Question 4: What type of training and technical assistance should the state provide grantee programs to effectively distribute this funding?

Lauren Shaller from My Sister's Place

I was just going to say my suggestion would be that there'd be some sort of way for all of us DV providers to be talking to each other on a regular basis, some sort of peer-to-peer support. So that we're not all reinventing the wheel, but we can really learn from each other's, trials and successes and be able to support each other in doing this really well.

Gabriela Sandoval Requena from New Destiny Housing

Since I have the microphone for next question I would just add, office hours, having weekly or bi-weekly office hours would be super helpful. And that would also give the opportunity for providers and participants to talk to each other as well as to the overseeing agency.

Elizabeth Santiago from Center for Safety & Change

For me the 1st thing I would say from a technical assistance perspective is share paperwork, so we're constantly not reinventing wheels. And the goal should not be reinventing wheels. So, you all administered the piece what did you see? what were the questions that you were all getting? And what were the questions? What did you see that worked? What didn't work for many organizations and share that with us? So that we're not finding ourselves in a place where we are doing the same things. And then you're reaching out to us to say that's not the way you should be doing it. Now, have the foresight in that process because it also helps us. So that we're not reinventing the wheel.

Ann Ellsworth from Putnam/Northern Westchester Women's Resource Center

I wasn't sure about this question. What I think without seeing the way the grant is going to be, or the distribution is going to happen. It's hard to tell what training and technical assistance would be needed until we have more data about that once it's determined how it will roll out. I think then we would understand more about it. What we might need, and I also would say that we may want to flip this a little bit and as the state to be trained by the agencies that they're funding so that you all have a more 1 on 1 understanding of the way the needs of the area and the needs of the client are, the way that the agency runs so you begin to look at how people are doing things. And you have a better understanding of how different each are. And ensuring that the state folks are as trained about who we are as we need to be trained about what is expected of us. It would lend itself to much more transparency and clarity of the process.

Aditi Bhattacharya from New York City Anti Violence Project

I guess this town hall is a way for you all to ask us the questions to know how to integrate your next steps. So, I'll give you gratitude for doing that. I think my answer to this would be that'd be minimal training and minimal technical assistance requirements. Because we would have discretion and trust in discussing the funds that way. We need to use our established platforms. So, it would be the supply chain would have very few elements that required training and technical assistance, except for, as receiving the funds and using them as we need to with our clients.

General Comments from Attendees

Christine Rodriguez from Equinox

Things that occurred to me was with the PEAFF funds, because that seems to be what we're sort of using as an example, is the limitations in regard to the household and what was required of the household. They had to already be either on TANF or they had to have somebody who was eligible for TANF in the household. For us that created a very large barrier regarding those folks who just did not have that. I just wanted that to be noted in terms of the eligibility.

Olga Rodriguez-Vidal from Safe Horizon

Not sure if anyone mentioned this but extend the timeframe to allocate the funds to survivors. Safe Horizon has numerous sites, and it was a big administrative lift to get all the funds distributed within the timeframe.

Robin

PEAFF funding was great for us; however, we could not utilize all of the allowed funding due to the short window of time in which to use it. Our community would have benefited greatly from an extended timeframe.

Laura Ahearn from Crime Victims Center

We were able to conduct extensive outreach and provide direct assistance to several DV victims using PEAFF funds. We were very pleased with the outcome and feel we made a real difference for a number of victims and their children. Our only recommendation would be that we be provided more time to identify potentially eligible victims.

Louise Miller from Advocacy Center of Tompkins County

PEAFF was great and it was so much work internally. It put a huge strain on the staff involved. From advocates to supervisors to our finance director.

Julie Ryan from YWCA of Cortland

From the financial side of things, one thing that would be helpful is for all grants to be on the same budget year.